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ABSTRACT

This document summarizes and highlights the main findings of a large scale research project concerned with the problem of innovation dissemination in adult basic education (ABE) providing an abbreviated, non-technical account of the research and pointing up the implications of the findings for policy decision-making at the State and national levels. The research focused on the Special Projects Program authorized under section 309(b) of the Adult Education Act of 1966. The document contains: (1) a few key observations of the role of the U. S. Office of Education, explaining some of the hisotrical factors that have contributed to problems of 309(b) dissemination; (2) analyses of a selected sample of projects to understand how they function and to look at what is disseminated, to whom, in what ways, and with what success, emphasizing factors that seem to facilitate or inhibit successful dissemination of project outcomes; and (3) discussion of the characteristics of local ABE programs associated with innovativeness generally and with 309(b) adoption in particular. Nine recommendations based on the research findings are presented and a model innovation-dissemination network described. (AJ)

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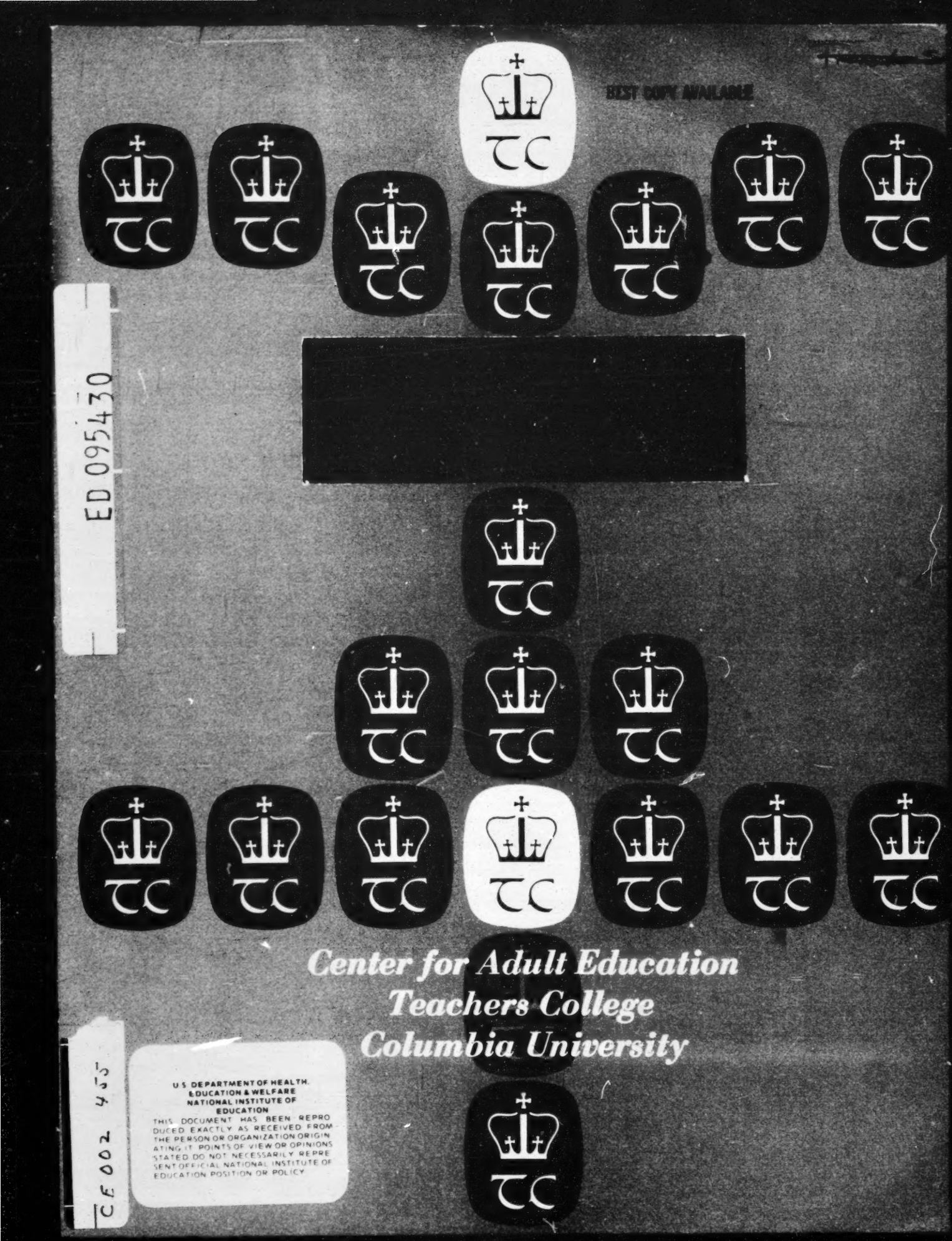

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Center Research Report No. 5

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PROBLEMS OF DISSEMINATION AND USE OF INNOVATIONS IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION: SELECTED RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gordon G. Darkenwald
Harold W. Beder
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Summary of Volume II

of

P L A N N I N G for I N N O V A T I O N
IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

A Study Directed by Jack Mezirow

-1974-

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	
PART ONE - NATURE OF THE STUDY	1
Purpose of Research	1
Research Procedures	2
PART TWO - THE ROLE OF USOE	3
Determining Priorities for 309(b) Experimentation and Development	4
Criteria for Screening and Selecting 309(b) Grantees	5
Analysis of Types of Projects Funded	5
Monitoring and Servicing of 309(b) Projects	8
PART THREE - DISSEMINATION AND THE 309(b) PROJECT	9
Description of Projects Studied	11
309(b) Dissemination Strategy: What, to Whom, in What Way	13
Dissemination Methods Used	14
The Effectiveness of 309(b) Dissemination	17
Communication Channels Used by Local ABE Directors	21
Key Factors Impeding Dissemination and Use of 309(b) Results	25
PART FOUR - CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INNOVATIVE ABE PROGRAM	31
The Nature of Innovativeness	31
Overview of Research Procedure	32
Major Correlates of Innovativeness	33

Page

PART FIVE - RECOMMENDATIONS 36

EPILOGUE - FIRST STEPS TOWARD A NATIONAL DISSEMINATION SYSTEM 45

Overview of Project IDEA 46

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1 - Functional Classification of Projects Funded in Fiscal Year 1973 7

2 - 309(b) Projects Studied In Depth 10

3 - Focus of 309(b) Project Dissemination 14

4 - Dissemination Strategies Used by 309(b) Projects Studied 14

5 - Local ABE Directors' Familiarity with and Use of 309(b) Project Ideas and Products 18

6 - Utilization Rate for Local Directors "Quite Familiar" with 309(b) Projects 19

7 - Utilization of 309(b) Products or Ideas by Local ABE Directors 20

8 - How Local ABE Directors First Learned of 309(b) Projects 21

9 - Local ABE Directors' Degree of Reliance on Selected Sources of Information and Assistance 23

10 - Innovativeness of ABE Program by Director's Professionalism 34

11 - Summary Table for Multiple Regression: Innovativeness with Budget, Size, Security, and Professionalism 35

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PART ONE

NATURE OF THE STUDY

This document summarizes and highlights the main findings of a large scale research project concerned with the problem of innovation dissemination in adult basic education (ABE).[1] Our intent in this paper is to provide an abbreviated, non-technical account of the research and to point up the implications of the findings for policy decision - making at the state and national levels.

Purpose of Research

The research focused on the Special Projects Program authorized under section 309(b) of the Adult Education Act of 1966. The legislation provides for experimental and demonstration projects which:

> (1) involve the use of innovative methods, systems, materials, or programs which the Commissioner determines may have national significance or be of special value in promoting effective programs under this title or (2) involve programs of adult education... [that] have unusual promise in promoting a comprehensive or coordinated approach to the problems of persons with basic educational deficiencies.

Concern had been expressed by those in leadership positions within the Office of Education and in the field about the 309(b) program's success in disseminating innovative ideas and practices to local public school and community college ABE programs. Consequently, the primary objective of the study was to probe the extent and effectiveness of 309(b) dissemination efforts and to recommend ways to improve dissemination so that the Special Projects Program could contribute more effectively to

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[1]The full technical report includes more than 200 pages of text and numerous tables and appendices. The reference is Gordon G. Darkenwald, Harold W. Beder, and Aliza Adelman, Problems of Dissemination and Use of Innovations in Adult Basic Education (New York: Center for Adult Education, Columbia University, 1974).

strengthening local adult education programs.

It is important to note that we did not attempt an evaluation of the 309(b) program. The research dealt with 309(b) activity mainly in relation to development and dissemination of improved products and practices to meet the needs of local ABE programs. As discussed subsequently in this report, the 309(b) program has been characterized by several distinctive programmatic thrusts, and not all activity bears directly on the concerns and problems of local ABE programs. For example, the enabling legislation provides for projects that demonstrate a "comprehensive or coordinated approach" to the delivery of ABE services. Such projects may well contribute to the long term national development of ABE, but in many cases they provide little in the way of direct payoff for local programs.

Research Procedures

The research strategy and data collection and analysis techniques are described in detail in the technical report and interpreted further in a recent paper.[1] In brief, the 309(b) program was viewed for research purposes as a single system comprised of three key subsystems: the Division of Adult Education (DAE) of USOE; the 309(b) projects themselves; and the intended users of 309(b) output, local ABE programs. It seemed to the researchers that examination of all three subsystems was required in order to gain sufficient understanding of the many complex factors affecting dissemination of 309(b) outcomes and their utilization by local programs.

The researchers used a combination of field and survey methods. In analyzing DAE's role in 309(b) and the operations of a sample of 309(b) projects, the researchers relied mainly on exploratory fieldwork involving open-

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[1]Harold W. Beder and Gordon G. Darkenwald, "Approaches to Upgrading Applied Research in Adult Education." Paper presented at the Adult Education Research Conference, Chicago, April 1974.

ended interviews, analysis of documents and records, observation of dissemination activities such as workshops, and inspection of tangible project outcomes such as films, curriculum materials, and publications. DAE staff were also administered a brief questionnaire. A second questionnaire was used to gather data from local ABE programs about familiarity with and use of 309(b) outcomes, communication and influence channels relevant to innovation adoption, barriers to innovation, and program characteristics associated with innovativeness. Usable returns were received from 805 programs, a response rate of 70 percent.

PART TWO

THE ROLE OF USOE

One concern of the study was the role of USOE's Division of Adult Education in the formulation of 309(b) policy and program priorities, in the evaluation of 309(b) grant proposals, and in monitoring and servicing 309(b) projects subsequent to grant award. It should be emphasized that there have been major changes in DAE's role since the research was conducted in the fall of 1972. For example, the evaluation of grant proposals at the time of research was conducted largely by DAE staff. More recently, review committees consisting of outside experts have helped to determine which proposals will be recommended for funding. In addition, DAE has recently made vigorous, systematic efforts to secure input from the field in determining 309(b) program priorities, whereas formerly policy making was heavily "top-loaded" (dominated by upper levels of H.E.W.) because no adequate mechanism existed for securing information on the needs perceived by the field.[1] For these reasons, our findings concerning USOE's role in 309(b)

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[1]The Center for Adult Education in a companion study assisted in development of a mechanism for surveying the needs of the field (state and local directors, teachers, etc.). See Jack Mezirow and Gladys Irish, Priorities for Experimentation and Development in Adult Basic Education (New York: Center for Adult Education, Columbia University, 1974).

decision-making can best be viewed as historical. This section consequently is limited to a few key observations, which if not descriptive of the current scene, at least help to explain some of the historical factors that have contributed to problems of 309(b) dissemination.

Determining Priorities for 309(b) Experimentation and Development

DAE staff generally viewed the process of determining 309(b) priorities as "top-loaded". When asked in a questionnaire to rate the importance of various influences on 309(b) official program priorities, they rated the highest levels of the H.E.W. bureaucracy (Secretary, Commissioner, Associate Commissioner) as collectively having the most influence, the Division itself as ranking second in influence, and input from practitioners in the field as having the least influence in determination of program priorities. While systematic input from the field was heavily reflected in fiscal year 1974 priorities, in the past such input was clearly inadequate. The consequences for dissemination and use of 309(b) output of a top-loaded approach to setting priorities for demonstration and experimentation are obvious. A critical factor in the adoption of innovations is the degree to which a particular innovation satisfies a need felt by potential users. Without accurate input from users in determining priorities for experimentation and development, discrepancies are likely to be found between what is produced by 309's and what is needed at the local level to solve the critical problems. In short, lack of input from practitioners in determining priorities can result in lack of utilization of output because there is no assurance that output will be relevant to local program needs.

Criteria for Screening and Selecting 309(b) Grantees

The relative importance of various factors involved in the process of evaluating proposals for funding was also analyzed. Not unexpectedly, the two factors ranked most important were a well conceived strategy for accomplishing the proposed project's stated objectives and the degree to which the proposed project reflected published national priorities. However, two critical dissemination-related criteria were ranked considerably lower by most DAE respondents. They were: (1) whether the results of the 309(b) will be easily adoptable or replicable and (2) indication that the proposed project will be innovative. While these criteria are irrelevant for certain types of projects, such as planning studies, they are critically important for projects aimed at developing innovations for use by local adult education programs. Obviously, projects that are not innovative or projects that do not produce easily adoptable outcomes are less likely than others to enjoy high rates of utilization by local programs.

Analysis of Types of Projects Funded

An effort was made to analyze all 309(b) projects funded between 1967 and 1972 according to such categories as urban/rural and national/local. Fiscal 1973 projects were also analyzed by "function". With limited information available (often only proposal abstracts), it was difficult to classify projects with a high degree of reliability, and of course some projects could not be classified at all into such dichotomies as urban/rural. Despite the crudeness of the analysis, the national/local breakdown has important implications for understanding the dissemination problem, as does the breakdown by project "function".

The national/local dichotomy refers to the intended scope of impact. National projects tend to be large and university-based and are often geared to development of materials, new practices, or systems that have at least indirect implications for a broad spectrum of local programs. Local impact projects, in contrast, tend to be small demonstration or pilot projects that perceive their clients to be a local educational system or a special population of learners, such as Indian or Chinese immigrants. They tend to be operational projects funded to meet some local need and seldom develop products or practices for other than local use.

Since 1971, but to a lesser extent in 1973, local impacts have far exceeded national focus projects both in absolute number and in proportion of total fiscal year funds allocated. In 1971, there were only six national scope projects (12 percent of total funds) compared with 43 local impacts. In 1972 these figures were nine and 50 respectively. Two factors that heavily influenced these figures in favor of local impacts were the 1971 Postal Service grant for $1 million and the Model Cities Joint Program, which accounted for 28 local impacts in 1972 alone.

While local impact projects tend to be primarily operational in nature, projects referred to above as national scope vary widely in purpose or function. The federal investment under 309(b) appears to have been allocated to at least four distinct categories of activity: (1) policy and planning studies of national scope; (2) experimental demonstration of new instructional, administrative, or delivery systems; (3) development of improved program practices and products, and (4) operational projects to meet special local needs. The first three categories are subsumed under the earlier designation "national scope". The fourth category indicates local impacts. Table 1 gives a breakdown of 309(b) projects by function for fiscal year 1973.

Table 1

Functional Classification of Projects

Funded in Fiscal Year 1973

Type of Project	No. of Projects	$ Allocated	Percent of Total Fiscal Year 73 $
Policy and Planning	8	1,413,353	.21
Demonstration of New Systems	7	1,093,813	.16
Development of Improved Practices and Products	7	800,768	.12
Local Impacts	33	3,426,466	.51
Totals	55	$6,734,400	100%

It is clear from Table 1 that in 1973 the majority of 309(b) projects fell into the local impact category. Moreover, many of the nationally-oriented projects were primarily concerned with policy and planning (e.g., the Adult Performance Level Project to define and measure functional literacy) and with demonstration of alternative systems (e.g., a four state cooperative project on educational TV). Most observers would probably agree that these are important and legitimate activities. Nonetheless, as noted previously, local impacts seldom disseminate anything to state grant ABE programs because they see their mission as operating a program for special local constituencies rather than developing products or practices for wider utilization. Furthermore, planning and policy projects and those that demonstrate alternative systems are not normally aimed at the immediate needs of local programs, although their indirect effects on grassroots practice may ultimately be substantial. Thus, only one category of 309(b) activity (accounting for only 12 percent of '73 funds) was found to be directly addressed to local program needs for improved practices and products. Clearly, then, 309(b) has not been primarily an R & D effort

geared directly to servicing local adult education programs, but instead has served [illegible] functions under a broad legislative mandate. A [illegible]to this conclusion is that much of the output of the 309(b) system was never intended or never suitable for utilization by local state grant programs.

Monitoring and Servicing of 309(b) Projects

The last task in our study of USOE's role in the 309(b) program was to assess the implications of monitoring and servicing for dissemination of 309(b) results. Each 309(b) project is assigned a USOE program officer who has responsibility for monitoring and servicing it. Monitoring refers to the process of gathering information on project operations to insure that the project adheres to its stated objectives and that it operates with a modicum of efficiency and effectiveness. Ideally, projects that perform unsatisfactorily are not recommended for refunding. Servicing is essentially a process of acting as a liaison between the project and USOE. For example, if a project wishes to make major modifications in its budget or work scope, it is the program officer who is contacted. Monitoring and servicing can, in theory at least, affect dissemination of 309(b) outcomes in several ways: (1) program officers can often stimulate faltering projects to meet their stated objectives; since abortive projects produce nothing to disseminate, this function is potentially important; (2) program officers can act as information conduits or link pins among projects and between projects and potential users or disseminators such as universities and state education departments; (3) program officers can promote dissemination by providing consultation to upgrade the quality of project output.

It was found that the potential benefits of monitoring and servicing activities have not been fully realized because of the following problems: (1) isolation of program officers from their projects due to inadequate travel funds; (2) high turnover among DAE staff and constant shifting of staff from one project to another; (3) lack of training and/or experience in adult education and consequent lack of professional expertise on the part of many staff members. Although DAE leadership is aware of these difficulties, lack of funds and other constraints pose severe obstacles to remedying the situation.

PART THREE

DISSEMINATION AND THE 309(b) PROJECT

The second link in the three-part 309(b) system was conceived to be the individual 309(b) project itself. The number of such projects has averaged about 50 per year, including both new projects and those refunded for a second or third year. 309(b) project grants have been awarded to a variety of organizations, most notably state education departments, universities, public school and community college districts, and diverse non-profit organizations concerned in some way with adult education.

The main purpose of this phase of the research was to analyze intensively a selected sample of projects in order to understand how they functioned and particularly to look at what was disseminated, to whom, in what ways, and with what success. Emphasis was placed on identifying factors that seemed to facilitate or inhibit successful dissemination of project outcomes. The analysis was based primarily on field studies of the following seven projects selected to achieve variability on such dimensions as scope of intended impact, type of output, visibility, recency, and potential importance for upgrading state grant programs.

Table 2

309(b) Projects Studied in Depth

Project	Grantee	Fiscal Year(s) Funded
Project RFD	University of Wisconsin at Madison and WHA-TV	1969-71
Project Communi-Link	Colorado State University at Fort Collins	1970-72
The SWCEL ABE Project	Southwestern Cooperative Educational Laboratory Albuquerque, New Mexico	1967-71
Texas Guidance and Counseling	University of Texas at Austin	1968-70
The Chinatown English Language Learning Center	The New York Chinatown Foundation, Inc. New York, New York	1972
The Lumbee ABE Project	The Lumbee Regional Development Association, Pembroke, North Carolina	1971-72
Project for the Spanish-speaking Community	Public Schools of the District of Columbia	1970-71

The technical report includes in-depth case studies of each of these projects as well as a summary section analyzing the dissemination-related issues generated by a comparison of the cases.[1] In the interest of brevity, the original 70 pages of case material are reduced here to a few paragraphs describing the major functions and outcomes of each project. The present discussion will deal mostly with the strategies used to disseminate project outcomes, the effectiveness of these strategies, and the key factors which seemed to inhibit dissemination of outcomes and their utilization by local

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[1] The case studies can also be found in Harold W. Beder and Gordon G. Darkenwald, Development, Demonstration, and Dissemination: Case Studies of Special Projects in Adult Basic Education (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Publications in Continuing Education, in press).

ABE programs. It should be noted that our emphasis on the problems of dissemination should not be construed as criticisms of the projects studied. On the contrary, the researchers felt that these projects were generally superior and staffed by dedicated and competent people.

Description of Projects Studied

1. Project RFD. University of Wisconsin, Madison. Purpose was to demonstrate the effectiveness of an integrated TV, home study, home contact and visit program for rural ABE. Outcomes included 20 TV units to create interest in ABE and stimulate use of "coping" oriented (e.g., money management) home study materials. These materials were later published by Steck-Vaughan.
2. Project Communi-Link, Colorado State University. A multi-state effort designed to demonstrate a system for community-wide involvement in ABE program development and other community improvement activities. The major outcome was the community organizing process itself, which featured a simulation game called Microville. The project utilized Microville workshops in various rural communities followed by technical assistance by project staff.
3. SWCEL ABE Project, Southwestern Cooperative Ed. Laboratory, N.M. A large scale project aimed at upgrading adult education for Mexican Americans. Outcomes included numerous tangible products such as "Empleen Ingles," 30 half-hour TV (and 16 mm film) units for basic English as a second language (ESL) instruction; ABE Readiness Materials; and several multi-media teacher training packages, e.g., Performance Objectives, Lesson Planning, and ESL Teacher Training.

4. Texas Guidance and Counseling, University of Texas, Austin. A five state project serving Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. Developed multi-media packages for training teachers and counselors in the basics of ABE counseling and guidance. Two packages were produced: the Teacher Awareness Kit (TAK) and the Counselor Orientation Package (COP).

5. Three Local Impact Projects. Although they served ethnically different populations, the three local impacts were alike in that all concentrated on developing operational programs for meeting the educational needs of minority group adults. None of the projects disseminated its results and none planned to. Because the projects saw themselves as operational rather than experimental, dissemination was considered irrelevant. The three projects are described briefly below.

New York's Chinatown English Language Center served about 600 students in a program that featured bi-lingual teachers, a learning laboratory and individual as well as group instruction using the audio-lingual approach to ESL.

North Carolina's Lumbee Adult Education Project served about 200 Lumbee Indians in a rural setting. The target area was divided into six "centers" each with a centrally located class conducted by a Lumbee teacher. A Lumbee paraprofessional "recruiter-coach" was assigned to each center and worked not only as a recruiter and classroom aide but as an in-home tutor for Indians who could not attend regular classes.

Washington, D.C.'s Program for the Spanish Speaking stressed ESL, computational skills, citizenship education, and consumer economics for Spanish-speaking adults. The project also offered occupational and personal counseling, job placement, and social service referral assistance. The curriculum emphasized what the project director termed "survival English" -- the

colloquial, functional English used in everyday speech. The project forged close linkage with community agencies to facilitate student recruitment and community support.

309(b) Dissemination Strategy: What, to Whom, in What Way?

The "what" of dissemination consists of the various project outcomes described above. Some of these outcomes were tangible products, such as SWCEL's 30 half-hour video units for ESL instruction; others were complex systems, for example the Communi-Link approach to program development. The Texas Guidance packages, although "hard" products, required training for effective use. To whom, then, were these various outcomes disseminated?

To Whom: The Targets of Dissemination

As discussed earlier in this section, national scope projects that demonstrate alternative systems seldom see the local ABE program as the relevant user. This was certainly true for RFD and Communi-Link. To oversimplify somewhat, RFD aimed its dissemination activities at opinion leaders in the national media and adult education establishments and Communi-Link targeted its dissemination program at state education officials. In both cases, successful replication of complex systems was not only beyond the resources of local ABE programs, but not at all relevant to their direct concerns. This is not to say that such projects could not benefit under-educated adults in important ways, perhaps outside the current state grant ABE structure. The point is, however, that unless projects are aimed at local ABE programs, we can expect little dissemination directed toward such programs and utilization becomes problematical. Our assessment of the focus of dissemination of the 309(b)'s studied is as follows:

Table 3

Focus of 309(b) Project Dissemination

Project	Dissemination Directly Focused on local ABE Programs
Texas Guidance and Counseling	Yes
SWCEL	Partially
RFD	No
Communi-Link	No
Local impacts (3)	No

Dissemination Methods Used

With the exception of the local impact projects, each project studied attempted to disseminate extensively. Publications, workshops, convention presentations, commercial publication, and teacher training were among the strategies used. Table 4 presents a summary.

Table 4

Dissemination Strategies Used by 309(b) Projects Studied

Project	Project Publications	Convention Presentations	Workshops	Commercial Publications	Teac Trai
Texas Guidance & Counseling	yes	no	yes	no	y
RFD	yes	yes	yes	yes	n
SWCEL	yes	yes	yes	no	y
Project Communi-Link	yes	yes	yes	no	n
Local Impact	no	no	no	no	n

Rather than describe how each project actually attempted to disseminate its results, we will comment briefly and in general terms on the strengths and weaknesses of each of the dissemination methods employed by the four national scope projects.

Publications. Publication efforts ranged from casual dissemination of annual reports to an extensive effort to reach many people through a professionally prepared newsletter. In each case where publications were used, the intent was merely to create awareness of the project rather than to convey detailed information. In other words, publications were used mainly for publicity. It was found, however, that general awareness information alone was generally insufficient to secure utilization of project outcomes. Detailed information, including data on project outcomes, their use, and benefits was required.

Convention Presentations. Advantages of convention presentations are that a large and appropriate target audience can be reached at reasonable cost and potential users can inspect products and ask questions regarding their use. In addition, conventions serve as word of mouth forums. Although often effective in creating awareness and interest, convention presentations tended to yield disappointing results in terms of actual utilization. Project outcomes were sometimes too complex to be communicated fully at conventions.

Workshops. The advantage of workshops is that through face-to-face contact very complex messages can be transmitted that are otherwise difficult to convey. Another advantage is that the project can receive immediate feedback in the form of user reactions to products or ideas. Drawbacks include high cost and limited scope in terms of number of potential adopters reached. For complex projects such as Communi-Link, however, the workshop approach to dissemination, while very costly, was virtually mandatory.

Commercial Publication. Only RFD utilized a commercial publisher to disseminate its materials. An important advantage of commercial publication is the commitment and capability of the publisher to disseminate long after the project's demise. Moreover, publishers generally "package" the product in attractive, usable form. Significantly, SWCEL attempted to find a commercial publisher but was unable to do so largely because its products were considered

too expensive to reproduce at a profit. Had SWCEL consulted a publisher early in the development stage, it might have been possible to package the materials in commercially feasible form. Disadvantages of commercial publication include cost to the user, and the time and effort involved in finding a publisher and negotiating a contract.

Teacher Training. Training was used very successfully by Texas Guidance to disseminate its Teacher Awareness Kit and Counselor Orientation Package. Selected teachers were first oriented to the use of the packages at a workshop held at the University of Texas. Upon their return, these teachers trained others, who in turn trained still more teachers. Thus a training "snowball" process was put into operation. Clearly, snowball training can be a very effective and inexpensive strategy, at least on a statewide or regional basis. An advantage of this approach is that state in-service education units are viable, established systems. Since dissemination channels are already established in the form of such units, they need only be exploited. Teacher training also permits the face-to-face contact necessary to convey complex messages. Finally, state-supported in-service training programs are ongoing systems that can continue to disseminate long after a 309(b) project has terminated its activities.

In summary, the 309(b) projects studied, except for the local impacts, used a variety of techniques to disseminate their outcomes. All projects relied to some extent on publications and workshops. Texas Guidance also used teacher training as a dissemination vehicle. RFD was able to secure a commercial publisher for its curriculum materials, but relied heavily on a publications program to create awareness and interest in its TV programming. SWCEL's dissemination effort was characterized by its staff as "too little, too late," but the other projects planned carefully for dissemination and expended considerable amounts of money, energy, and time in attempting to secure adoption or replication. The next section assesses the impact of

these and other 309(b) dissemination efforts.

The Effectiveness of 309(b) Dissemination

A question included in our national survey of 805 local ABE directors read as follows: "Listed below are some major 309(b) projects funded in the past. Please indicate how familiar you are with each project." Seven of the largest and most publicized projects were listed and briefly described.[1] Respondents were asked to check one of four response options: (1) never heard of it; (2) heard of it but have no details; (3) quite familiar, but have not used project ideas or products; (4) quite familiar. I have used project ideas or products.

As might be expected, the results indicated that project dissemination efforts were most successful within their respective geographical regions. Thus, in the Southwest 60 percent of local directors had at least heard of SWCEL and in the same region some 73 percent had heard of Texas Guidance and Counseling. Reported adoption rates in this region were 12.4 percent for SWCEL and 19.2 percent for Texas Guidance. In Western states, about 53 percent of local directors had heard of Communi-Link and some 13 percent reported using a project idea or product.

Although the 309(b)projects listed in our questionnaire seemed to have met with some regional dissemination success, none, except possibly the Appalachian ABE Center, succeeded particularly well in disseminating nationally, as Table 5 shows.

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[1]In addition to the four projects studied in depth, the list included the Appalachian ABE Center (Kentucky), the Adult Armchair Project (Pa.), and the Southern Regional Educational Board ABE Project (Ga.).

Table 5

Local ABE Directors' Familiarity with and Use of 309(b) Project Ideas and Products (In Percent, N=605)

Project	Never Heard of	Heard of but Have No Details	Quite Familiar but Have Not Used Products	Quite Familiar and Have Used Products
Texas Guidance & Counseling	52.7	29.7	8.9	8.7
Project RFD	60.1	25.2	11.7	3.0
Communi-Link	63.7	19.5	10.7	6.1
SWCEL ABE Project	66.5	22.3	7.1	4.1
Adult Armchair	67.2	20.0	7.4	5.5
Appalachian ABE Center	31.4	40.8	15.3	12.5
SREB ABE Project	66.3	19.1	6.1	8.5

In terms of the scope of dissemination, Table 5 shows that six of the seven widely publicized 309(b) projects failed to reach at least half of the local ABE directors. In terms of depth, the data indicate that most ABE directors who had heard of the projects did not possess detailed information about them, and that no project achieved more than a 12.5 percent utilization rate.

Detailed knowledge, as contrasted with general awareness information, seems to be a significant factor in securing utilization of project outcomes. When the percentage of utilization reported by directors who claimed that they were "quite familiar" with the projects is computed, the following results:

Table 6

Utilization Rate for Local Directors "Quite Familiar" with 309(b) Projects (In Percent)

Project	Percent of Local Title III Directors who Used Products or Ideas
Texas Guidance & Counseling	49.3
RFD	20.7
Project Commui-Link	36.4
SWCEL	36.4
Adult Armchair	42.6
Appalachian ABE Project	45.0
SREB	58.3

In general it appears that once local directors became quite familiar with a 309(b) project, the utilization rate was at least moderate. RFD seems to be an exception, but its major product was a highly technical TV instructional system not suited to replication by local programs.

The lesson these figures seem to convey is that local ABE directors will and do use 309(b) products and ideas once they have become sufficiently familiar with them. In part, the answer to increased utilization seems to be more efficient and extensive dissemination of detailed information.

Up to this point, the dissemination experience of seven well known 309(b) projects has been primarily used as a basis for analyzing dissemination effectiveness. Another measure of effectiveness is direct utilization data pertaining to all 309(b) projects funded since 1967.

Table 7

Utilization of 309(b) Products or Ideas by Local ABE Directors (In Percent, N=805)

Number of 309(b) Projects Utilized by Local ABE Directors	% of ABE Directors
0	65.1
1	21.5
2	8.1
3	2.5
4	1.7
5 or more	1.1

Nearly two-thirds of the local ABE directors sampled never used a 309(b) product or idea. On the surface this may suggest that national 309(b) dissemination has been largely ineffective, but there are several mitigating factors. First is the fact that although a total of 87 309(b) projects were funded between 1967 and 1971, many took several years to develop disseminatable outcomes, and others, recently funded, have not as yet achieved results. Thus the number of projects that have produced disseminatable outcomes is considerably less than 87. Second is the fact that the widespread utilization of innovations often takes a considerable amount of time, and the 309(b) program is relatively new. Third, most 309's were local impacts which never attempted to disseminate results. Fourth, some 309's, such as RFD and Communi-Link, focused on demonstrating a novel system not intended for replication by local ABE programs, but holding some promise for the long term development of adult education in the United States. Other projects, including the present study, were geared to the planning and coordination needs of state and federal decision-makers. Finally, it should be emphasized that our survey only measured

direct and conscious utilization of 309(b) results. The local directors who completed the questionnaire had to know that a product or idea did indeed come from a 309(b) project. There is little doubt that some proportion of the respondents had used products or ideas produced by 309(b) projects, but were unaware of the original source. Despite these mitigating factors, it does appear to us that national dissemination of 309(b) results has not been as effective as it could be.

Communication Channels Used by Local ABE Directors

If effective dissemination is an issue, it is useful to know which dissemination channels are the most extensively used by local ABE directors. Survey respondents were asked to identify how they had first learned of the seven 309(b) projects listed in the questionnaire. The pooled results for all seven projects are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

How Local ABE Directors First Learned of 309(b) Projects: Mean Percentages for Sources of Information

Information Source	Mean Percent Using Source
The state education department	24.1
State or national conventions	17.0
Project publications	15.2
Staff development or in-service sessions	12.1
Other, not specified	11.5
Workshops conducted by the project	8.6
Other ABE directors	4.8
Director's own staff	2.4

There is some difficulty in interpreting these data. Did local directors first learn of the projects the way they did because the projects

stressed particular dissemination channels, or are certain channels particularly effective for securing information and thus utilized by directors independently of 309(b) project emphasis? Despite this difficulty it is clear that state education departments are the single most important source of 309(b)information and probably the most effective. State or national conventions and project publications are also important sources for first information regarding 309 projects. Interestingly, however, project workshops were seldom identified as a first source for 309 information, despite the fact that they were a widely used (but perhaps inefficient) dissemination strategy.

Another way to assess the potential effectiveness of dissemination strategies is to determine what sources local directors typically rely on for information and assistance. The assumption is that local directors seek information for help in solving problems. If a 309(b) project can tap the sources that local directors typically rely on, the chances that local directors will receive and heed the message are considerably enhanced. Our survey asked the following: "In general, to what degree do you rely on the following sources of information or assistance for help in solving problems?" Local directors responded on a 1 to 5 scale, 1 indicating little or no degree of reliance and 5 indicating a great deal of reliance.

Table 9

Local ABE Directors' Degree of Reliance on Selected Sources of Information and Assistance

Source	Mean Scale Score
Your own staff	4.2
*State ABE department	3.9
Your own expertise	3.9
ABE students	3.4
*Other ABE directors	3.0
*Professional publications	2.9
*Experts in the school system	2.8
*State or regional adult education associations	2.5
*Commercial publishers	2.5
*University or college resources	2.3
*National adult education associations	2.1
*309(b) projects	1.7

*Sources of information external to local ABE programs.

"Your own staff," "Your own expertise," and "ABE students" are all sources internal to local programs and thus cannot serve as dissemination channels. Of the external sources, however, the state education department again ranks first, underscoring its potential as a dissemination channel. "Other ABE directors" ranked second as an external information and assistance source, a finding which suggests that if a 309 outcome could be disseminated to local ABE opinion leaders, they might convey the message to many other local directors.

The mean reliance scores for the remaining sources all fall below the midpoint of the scale (3), indicating a weak degree of reliance. It is significant to note that many of the commonly used dissemination strategies such as publications, presentations at professional association conventions, and staff development workshops fall below the scale midpoint .

To summarize, our findings show that state education departments are the most commonly used external source of assistance and information and are the source where the greatest number of local directors first learn of 309(b) projects. This suggests that dissemination would be enhanced if this channel were more extensively cultivated by 309(b) projects. Another commonly consulted external source is other ABE directors, a finding which suggests that dissemination would be facilitated were it focused toward local ABE opinion leaders. This dissemination tactic has seldom been systematically used, however, as is evidenced by the finding that few local directors learned of 309(b) projects from other ABE directors.

Aside from state education departments, the most common sources of information regarding 309(b) projects were state or national conventions and project publications -- despite the fact that local directors rated them as rather unimportant sources of information and assistance in solving problems. Both channels, however, are commonly used by 309(b) projects for dissemination, a fact that probably accounts for their importance as a source of 309(b) information. Although the 309(b) projects listed were partially successful in disseminating regionally, only one managed to convey its message nationally, a situation that might have been different had the projects used dissemination channels more commonly consulted by local ABE directors. Workshops, a very common dissemination strategy used by 309(b) projects, were determined to be ineffective both as an information source about 309(b) projects and as a source of information local directors rely on.

The findings also show that once a local director becomes quite familiar with a 309(b) project, the chances are fairly good that he will use a product or idea. This suggests that more effective and extensive dissemination of detailed project information will significantly enhance utilization.

Key Factors Impeding Dissemination and Use of 309(b) Results

Utilization figures for the 309(b) program as a whole show that two-thirds of the local directors have never used a 309(b) product or idea. The obvious conclusion is that dissemination has been less effective than desired. In light of this conclusion, an important issue is what factors have impeded dissemination. The results of our field studies provide some answers.

The Problem of Continuity

One of the greatest impediments to effective dissemination is lack of continuity. What happens to dissemination after a project terminates? The answer generally is that dissemination ceases, for there is no money or staff available to conduct workshops, prepare publications, conduct training sessions, or make convention presentations. In SWCEL's case, thousands of dollars worth of materials lie stocked in a storage area. Orders can be filled, but there is no on-going dissemination effort. Moreover, SWCEL's materials normally require training for their use, but there is no one currently available to conduct that training. Likewise, when Project Communi-Link disbands, the Communi-Link process will probably end also, for there will be no one to train others in the use of Microville. Most of Texas Guidance and Counseling's dissemination activities outside Region VI have come to a halt since project termination.

Termination seems to produce 309(b) ghost towns. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that most projects do not succeed in fully developing their outcomes until just prior to project termination, and then there is little time to disseminate.

The answer to this crucial problem seems to be to link 309(b) dissemination to a permanent system which will continue to further adapt, evaluate and disseminate project output following the project's demise. State education departments, regional staff development projects, and commercial publishers presently constitute such systems. The Texas State Education Department, for example, still encourages use of the Texas Guidance and Counseling materials though the project terminated in 1971. RFD's home study materials will be in commercial circulation for some years to come.

The state education department seems to be viable as a permanent dissemination system. Our findings show that for local ABE directors it is the most widely used source of 309(b) project information and it is the external source to which they are most likely to turn for information and assistance in solving problems. There are, however, two possible drawbacks to relying solely on state education departments as permanent dissemination systems. Since there are fifty separate state education departments, each one would have to be informed of 309(b) outcomes in detail sufficient to enable utilization by local ABE programs. This would take more time and money than most 309(b) projects possess. Second, if all 309(b) projects funded between 1967 and 1972 had attempted national dissemination through state educational systems, these systems would have been unable to handle the sheer volume of input. Perhaps a national agency is required to mediate between the 309's and the state education departments in order to facilitate a coherent and manageable system of national dissemination.

Communicability

If a product is to be utilized, the developer must be able to communicate detailed information about the product to the user. It is thus difficult to secure utilization of products which are difficult to communicate. The problem of communicability can be conceived as a continuum. Simple, tangible products are the easiest to communicate, because the user can learn all he needs to learn about them by simple inspection. An example might be SWCEL's Materials Library Evaluation. Few products in education fall at this end of the continuum, however. At the other end of the continuum fall complex, process oriented outcomes. These are generally products where the user is expected to adopt a system rather than something tangible. Products of this nature may require extensive face-to-face explanation, observation, and training to communicate effectively. Moreover, in making his decision to adopt or reject, a potential user will probably want detailed evaluative information. Adoption may well require assistance from the developer. Project Communi-Link's product, community development utilizing the Microville game, is indeed complex and difficult to communicate -- so complex in fact that a two-day workshop is needed to convey the message. As a result, the product itself could not be disseminated nationally (through training of trainers) because the expense in time and money would have been enormous. Consequently, project Communi-Link had to restrict itself to an awareness-producing national dissemination effort incapable in itself of producing adoption. SWCEL's products for the most part were complex and training was required for their use. Training is time consuming, expensive, and requires the maintenance of a training staff. When an end to funding produced termination of its training capability, SWCEL's materials began to gather dust in a storeroom.

Cost of Adoption

Obviously, the more a product costs to adopt, the more difficult it will be to disseminate -- other factors such as the need for the product held constant. There are several factors which comprise cost, the most obvious being the product price. To offset production cost, SWCEL and Texas Guidance and Counseling charged between $100 and $200 for their packages. Local ABE directors of moderate sized programs who were questioned felt that price was a drawback, since purchase funds had to come from the most strained part of their line item budgets. Price is an even greater problem for small, less affluent programs. Price is to some extent overcome if a product can be shared among programs. The Texas Guidance and Counseling package, for example, may be divided and circulated.

Trialability and Divisibility

Trialability refers to the user's ability to experiment with a product -- to try it on a limited basis before committing the entire program to product use. Divisibility refers to the ability to use a portion of a product without having to accept the "whole package." The two concepts are quite similar. In nine pilot interviews held with local ABE directors prior to construction of a survey questionnaire, a constant finding was extreme reluctance to use a product without first-hand knowledge best gained from experimentation in one's own program.

Project Communi-Link's product is not trialable. A community must totally accept or reject the concept from the beginning, and strictly speaking, it is not divisible. The packages developed by Texas Guidance and Counseling, on the other hand, are both trialable and divisible. The packages can be used by all teachers in a program or by just a few. Group use is encouraged, but individual use is possible, and the packages are organized in self-contained sections, so that some parts can be used and others ignored without destroying the integrity of the package.

Modifiability

Modifiability refers to the ability of a local program to adapt a product to unique aspects of the local situation. ABE programs are found in many different settings. Instructional techniques vary as do the target populations served. If a 309(b) product cannot be adapted to the local situation (should adaptation be necessary), national dissemination is precluded. The packages developed by Texas Guidance and Counseling are quite modifiable. In fact, in Lousiana they were significantly modified to take account of the large French-speaking population, a fact that contributed to a reported 90 percent use rate by teachers in that state.

In contrast, the RFD television programs were criticized for their lack of modifiability. Since each taped program contained references to specific local names and places, each would have to be edited for use elsewhere. Complex equipment is required for editing, however, making adaptation difficult and expensive.

Relevance to ABE

A recurrent theme in much of the dissemination literature is the concept of "relative advantage." A potential user is unlikely to use a product unless the potential benefits outweigh the difficulties of adoption. It follows that the dissemination of 309(b) products to ABE programs is likely to be ineffective unless the products are relevant to program needs. The relevance of some 309(b) projects to local programs is indirect. The Communi-Link process and the Microville game, for example, were not intended for direct use by local ABE programs. The need for production and technical expertise plus the expense of RFD made it largely irrelevant to local programs, and some of SWCEL's packages seem to be of doubtful utility for ABE practitioners. This is not to say that all 309(b) projects should serve the immediate needs of local state-grant adult edu-

cation programs. Certainly there is a need for policy-oriented program analysis and for projects that demonstrate alternative organizational or instructional systems. Nonetheless, adoption of outcomes of such projects by local programs cannot be expected.

Motivation and Ability to Disseminate

Motivation and ability to disseminate are two obvious preconditions to any successful dissemination effort. Yet we have found that many 309(b) projects possess neither characteristic. Most of these fall within the general category of local impact projects. They are not motivated to disseminate because they perceive their primary mission to be the operation of an on-going educational program rather than the demonstration of a new practice. Moreover, they are typically isolated from local ABE programs and other 309(b) projects and are thus unaware that their outcomes could be of value to others. Since many local impact projects operate on marginal budgets, they do not have the resources to disseminate even if they desire to.

With the absence of strong Office of Education incentives, 309(b) projects cannot be expected to disseminate more than they have to date. The problem is that USOE cannot require dissemination without making funding provisions for it. Given the fact that approximately fifty projects have been funded per year in recent years, funding individual project dissemination efforts would be prohibitively expensive. Moreover, the skills and interests needed for effective dissemination are often different from those required for effective project development.

PART FOUR

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INNOVATIVE ABE PROGRAM

The third major element in our conceptualization of the 309(b) system was the local ABE program in its role as user of 309(b) results. The preceding section examined certain aspects of the local program as user system in analyzing rates of 309(b) adoption and channels of communication used by local ABE directors. The present section concentrates on the characteristics of local ABE programs associated with innovativeness generally and with 309(b) adoption in particular. The key question is, what makes for an innovative program? If we can at least partly answer that question, it may be possible to encourage change in existing programs so that innovation is more likely to occur.

The Nature of Innovativeness

In our view, innovation can be equated with planned change for the purpose of more effective pursuit of organizational goals. As Miles suggests: "Innovation is a species of the genus 'change.' Generally speaking it seems useful to define an innovation as a deliberate, novel, specific change, which is thought to be more efficacious in accomplishing the goals of a system...."[1]

We found it much easier to define innovation than to measure it. Ultimately, we decided to use several independent measures to determine the innovativeness of ABE programs. These included: (1) self ratings of innovativeness by local program directors; (2) nominations for "most innovative

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[1]Matthew B. Miles (ed.), Innovation in Education. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1964), p. 14.

program" on a state by state basis; (3) an index of adoption of 309(b) output; and (4) an "objective" index of seven specific practices.[1]

Overview of Research Procedures

The full technical report provides a detailed description of the research procedure at this state of the study including information on sampling, instrumentation, the construction of indices, and statistical analysis. Only a brief synopsis is given here.

The national questionnaire survey of 805 local ABE programs referred to previously was used to collect the data for this phase of the study. Included in the questionnaire were items comprising the objective index and the index of 309(b) adoption as well as questions that asked the respondent to rate the innovativeness of his own program and to nominate the one ABE program in his state that he considered most innovative. Additional items asked for information on program factors judged potentially important in explaining innovativeness, such as size, budget, staff characteristics, and institutional security. It should be noted that of the 348 nominations for "most innovative program" (some programs received multiple nominations), we were able to locate completed questionnaires for 111. In other words, 111 programs that received one or more nominations were included in our study sample and also returned usable questionnaires. Thus, we were able to single out the nominated programs and compare them with the total sample on the basis of such factors as size, budget and security.

The data were analyzed in several ways. First, a correlation matrix was generated so that every variable was correlated with every other variable.

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[1] Included were (1) use of volunteers as teacher aides; (2) use of programmed instructional materials; (3) classes held in student homes; (4) use of coping skills (e.g, how to get a job) curriculum materials; (5) teachers trained to perform counseling functions; (6) classes held in business or industrial sites; (7) aides employed to recruit students. Although not extraordinarily novel, these practices represent definite departures from conventional practice. Really "hot" innovations are not widespread enough to be useful for a survey study.

This procedure was especially useful in determining which variables to use for further analysis and in the construction of indices. After examination of the intercorrelations and the development of indices, the data were analyzed in cross-tabular form followed by multiple regression to provide more precise estimates of the impact of each independent variable on innovativeness in ABE programs.

Major Correlates of Innovativeness

The results of extensive data analyses revealed that four variables were especially important in accounting for innovativeness in ABE programs. These variables were size of program, budget, security, and director's professionalism. Security was measured by an index based on the following four variables, each weighted equally: success recruiting students, degree of community awareness of the ABE program, the "supportiveness" of the parent organization, and the program's own assessment of the degree to which it is secure and established. Director's professionalism was measured by a more complex index. In brief, the index was based on the assumption that the professional director is more likely to: (1) devote most of his time to ABE and other adult education responsibilities; (2) have more formal training in the field of adult education; (3) be more active in adult education professional associations; (4) see adult education as central to his future career plans.

As noted earlier, several measures were used to determine innovativeness. Regardless of the measure used (i.e., self-ratings, nominations, objective index, 309(b) adoption index), size, budget, security and professionalism emerged as key predictors of innovative programs. In the interest of brevity, only two tables are included in the present report. In each table, the measure of innovativeness employed was the objective index of seven selected practices. The results would not look greatly different had we chosen one of the other measures of innovativeness.

Table 10 shows the relationship between director's professionalism and program innovativeness. Director's professionalism is emphasized rather than size, budget or security because this factor proved by far the most important in discriminating between innovative and less innovative programs.

Table 10

Innovativeness of ABE Program by Director's Professionalism (In Percent, N=805)

Program Innovativeness	Director's Professionalism Low (n=276)	Moderate (n=267)	High (n=262)
Low	56.5	40.0	15.3
Medium	25.4	21.0	16.0
High	18.1	39.0	68.7
Total	100%	100%	100%

As Table 10 indicates, two-thirds of the directors who scored high on professionalism headed highly innovative programs. However, less than a fifth (18.1%) of those who scored low on the professionalism index headed innovative programs.

It might be argued that the relationship shown in Table 10 is spurious due, for example, to the fact that highly professional directors are more likely to head large programs and that size, not professionalism, is the key variable in accounting for innovativeness. In order to be reasonably sure that the relationship was not spurious, and to obtain precise estimates of the impact of such factors as size, budget, security and professionalism in relation to innovativeness, we employed the technique of multiple regression analysis. This complex statistical procedure is explained more fully in the technical report. Briefly, multiple regression permits examination of the relationship of a <u>set</u> of independent variables to a dependent variable

while taking into account ("controlling for") the interrelationships of the independent variables (e.g., the correlation between size and professionalism). The order in which the independent variables are introduced into the regression formula is important because the first variable is not controlled, whereas each succeeding variable is controlled on every variable that precedes it. Thus, in Table 11, budget is not controlled, but professionalism is controlled on budget, size and security in that order. Regression analysis yields a "pure" measure of the independent effect of each predictor variable on the dependent variable, in this case innovativeness.

Table 11

Summary Table for Multiple Regression: Innovativeness with Budget, Size, Security and Professionalism

Independent Variable	Multiple Correlation	R Square (Variance)	Simple Correlation	Beta
Budget	.28	.08	.28	.08
Size	.32	.10	.26	.11
Security	.35	.12	.19	.09
Professionalism	.51	.26	.48	.41

Roughly, what Table 11 tells us is that professionalism has about four times the impact of any of the other variables (its Beta weight, .41, is about four times greater than the other Betas). If we examine the cumulative amount of variance "explained" by these four variables, we see that the introduction of professionalism into the formula more than doubles the explained variance from .12 to .26.

In conclusion, our research showed that the professionalism of the ABE director was the single most important variable in "explaining" program innovativeness. Size, budget and security were also important factors, independent of their correlation with each other and with professionalism. Of course, these relationships are fundamentally associational. It has not been proven that the director's professionalism is a "cause" of innovativeness. But, as with smoking and lung disease, the logic of a causal link is compelling when other probable factors are examined simultaneously and fail to suppress the original correlation.

PART FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS

The implications that we derived from the research findings for policy decision-making at the state and national levels are summarized below. The recommendations are based on two assumptions. The first is that a major objective of the 309(b) program is to improve existing state grant adult education programs. The second is that to achieve this objective, local adult education programs must become more aware of 309(b) outcomes and utilize them.

(1) THE DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION SHOULD CLARIFY THE GOALS OF THE 309(b) PROGRAM, DETERMINE PRIORITIES, AND ALLOCATE RESOURCES ACCORDINGLY

The goals of 309(b) need clarification. In the present study it was necessary to infer them from analysis of the types of projects funded. Goals define the long term mission of the program and should not be confused with the published annual "priorities" which dictate substantive topics or problem areas to be emphasized by specific projects. Current

goals, inferred in the process of research, include: 1) responding to local needs not adequately met by state-grant ABE programs; 2) building the information base needed for rational program planning and development on a national basis; 3) experimenting with and evaluating alternative instructional, organizational, and delivery systems; and 4) development of specific innovative practices and products to directly assist local ABE programs. Another more recent goal appears to be 5) dissemination of 309(b) results to promote their wider utilization. The functional classification of projects presented earlier corresponds to these implicit program goals. For example, local impact projects respond to high priority local needs for operational programs. Policy and planning studies generate needed information for long-term planning and program development. These different types of projects vary greatly in the way they are organized and operate, in the staff and institutional capabilities required, in intended users of their results, and in the criteria relevant to their evaluation.

The Division should first determine whether these five goals currently pursued represent the directions it wants 309(b) to follow. If so, it should establish an appropriate balance by rationally allocating its resources among them. For example, 309(b) funds might be allocated according to goals as follows: 1) local needs, 10%; 2) national planning, 10%; 3) alternative systems, 20%; 4) improved program practices, 50%; and 5) dissemination, 10%. Whatever the formula, the point is that resources should be allocated according to a rational plan to achieve program goals.

(2) THE DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION SHOULD REQUIRE PROJECT APPLICANTS TO SPECIFY THE INTENDED USERS OF PROJECT RESULTS AND, AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME, TO SUBMIT A DISSEMINATION PLAN

We have found that many 309(b) projects do not have a clear idea of who will make use of their results. If 309(b) projects cannot specify their intended users, then effective dissemination is precluded. Most local impact projects do not even see dissemination of results as relevant to their purposes. Nonetheless, many of these projects do demonstrate practices that could have applicability elsewhere. It is especially difficult to determine the intended users of projects that demonstrate alternative instructional, organizational, or delivery systems. The question needs to be asked, for whom is the demonstration being conducted? Depending on the particular project, intended users might include state ABE agencies, university professors, local ABE programs, or USOE itself. The question of intended users is pertinent to every project of whatever type that is funded under 309(b).

Once intended users are specified, it is possible for projects to develop relevant dissemination plans. This does not mean that every project must make a major dissemination effort on its own. Certain projects, for example, could plan for dissemination through linkages with state ABE agencies or in collaboration with a national dissemination system that might be established to meet this need. What is essential, however, is that every 309(b) project develop an appropriate plan to ensure that its results will be put to use.

(3) THE DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION SHOULD INSTITUTE A PROCEDURE FOR ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF THE FIELD ON A SYSTEMATIC, PERIODIC BASIS AND USE THE RESULTS IN DETERMINING FUNDING PRIORITIES

The policy setting process that annually determines the kinds of 309(b) projects supported by the Division has been "top loaded" in that the major inputs have come from the HEW bureaucracy and the

Division itself. Until recently, there has been no mechanism to systematically assess needs expressed by the field. This situation has served to impede the relevance of 309(b) to local ABE programs. Efforts to enhance the utilization of 309(b) results will prove futile unless projects address themselves to the real needs of ABE programs. But first it is necessary for the Division to establish a mechanism for identifying and ordering these needs, perhaps on a tri-annual basis.

The Division has already responded to this problem by supporting a demonstration project, conducted by the Center for Adult Education, which developed a system for identifying and evaluating priority needs of the field. The question now is how to institutionalize such a mechanism to insure periodic input from the field as a basis for developing specific 309(b) funding priorities.

(4) WHEN EVALUATING PROPOSALS, THE DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION SHOULD CAREFULLY WEIGH WHETHER A PROPOSED APPLICANT'S OUTCOMES WILL BE DISSEMINATABLE

Our findings indicate that the primary criterion used to decide whether or not to fund a proposal is whether or not the proposed project is capable of achieving its stated objects. This practice is commendable, for abortive projects do not produce results that can be disseminated and used. On the other hand, it was found that whether a potential grantee's outcomes will be replicable (or adoptable) and innovative have been relatively unimportant criteria in evaluating proposals. Since innovativeness and replicability are crucial to utilization of 309(b) outcomes by ABE programs, it is important that the Division strongly consider whether a proposed project will produce innovative and replicable outcomes when evaluating proposals.

Our research shows, too, that there are several characteristics of 309(b) outcomes that impede or facilitate their utilization by local ABE programs. The Division should make use of these findings by giving preference to projects that propose to produce products that are easy to communicate, inexpensive to adopt, trialable, divisible, and modifiable. Local ABE directors report that the most significant impediment to program innovation is cost. Hence the Division should pay special attention to this factor.

(5) THE DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS SHOULD MAKE FURTHER EFFORTS TO IMPROVE ITS MONITORING AND SERVICING FUNCTIONS

Several factors that inhibit effective monitoring and servicing of 309(b) projects were identified in this report. One problem is that meaningful communication between projects and program officers has been impeded by a constant shifting of project assignments. When communication is disrupted, program officers have difficulty adequately servicing and monitoring their assigned projects. Another problem related to communication is lack of adequate travel funds for program officers to visit their projects. Projects cannot be meaningfully assisted or monitored if program officers are permitted only one site visit annually. It is clear that the 309(b) program suffers as a consequence of restrictive USOE travel regulations.

Still another handicap is that some program officers, by their own admission, are inadequately trained for their responsibilties. Appropriate professional training should be a major criterion in selection of new staff. Staff who lack such training or equivalent experience should be encouraged and assisted to obtain it. At present, the Division relies mostly on an apprenticeship approach to on-the-job training for new program officers, but this system has been shown to be unsatisfactory. If a formal in-service training program were instituted, new employees might

be better trained in less time, enabling them to perform the monitoring and servicing functions better and more efficiently.

(6) *A CONTINUING NATIONAL SYSTEM FOR RETRIEVING, STORING, EVALUATING, ADAPTING, AND DISSEMINATING 309(b) OUTCOMES AND OTHER RELEVANT INNOVATIONS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED*

This study found that many 309(b) outcomes are never used by ABE programs. A major reason for this situation is that 309(b) projects are temporary systems and all dissemination activity ceases when projects terminate. In most cases materials produced by projects are no longer available from any source and sometimes there is no record at all of project activities and outcomes. The traces simply vanish into files and storage bins. Another reason for under-utilization of 309(b) outcomes is that few projects are willing or able to disseminate effectively. Dissemination requires specialized skills and resources beyond the capability of most projects. It is evident, moreover, that it is neither rational nor cost-effective to expect every 309(b) project to undertake its own dissemination effort. An ongoing national system seems to us essential if USOE is to realize the full fruits of its investment in the 309(b) program. The current non-system is simply incapable of securing widespread utilization of 309(b) results by local ABE programs. The main features of the proposed system are briefly outlined below.

- For many reasons, proximity of the user system to the dissemination source enhances adoption. The proposed national system should be decentralized on a state or regional basis, but there should be a national headquarters to plan and coordinate efforts, train regional dissemination agents, retrieve and store *materials*, operate a computerized data bank, organize a publications program, and perform other necessary functions. Our findings show that state

directors feel that there is significant potential for regional cooperation, a factor that bodes well for the regional operation of such a system.

- The national system, through its regional networks, should work very closely with the state education departments and other established channels of ABE communication such as professional associations and regional staff development projects. State education agencies have been shown to be especially important channels for communication and support of innovations.

- Each 309(b) grantee should be required to consult with the national system regarding its dissemination plans. If the 309(b) project has the capability of disseminating and such an effort by the project itself is warranted, the national system would help the project design a dissemination plan. It would then continue the dissemination effort after the project's termination. For other projects, especially the local impact type, the national system itself would undertake the major burden of disseminating results.

- The national system should maintain a computerized data bank that includes information on 309 (b) and other innovations and detailed data about the characteristics of every Title III ABE program in the country. The data bank will enable the system to match innovations with potential users.

- We have found that many promising innovations are not utilized because further development is needed (e.g., field testing) before they are ready for distribution and use. Many of the prototype products developed by SWCEL fit in this category. Once identified, promising

innovations of this kind require "adaptive development" so that they can be disseminated and used. The national system should have adaptive development as part of its function. Funds would be needed for this purpose, but they would dwarf the original development costs of materials salvaged from 309(b) projects alone.

- Our findings have convinced us that person-to-person dissemination efforts are generally necessary if 309(b) results are to actually be utilized by teachers, administrators, and others in local programs. Consequently, each region should be assigned a dissemination officer who would function somewhat like a Cooperative Extension agent. Essentially, his job would be to identify local needs as well as locally produced innovations, to interpret innovative ideas and practices, to provide technical assistance to adopters, and to serve as a general resource and communications channel both for local programs and state education agencies. He would be the link pin between the region and the national headquarters.

- The national system, through its regional dissemination officers, should identify local ABE programs which are opinion leaders in their areas to engage their cooperation as innovation diffusion centers. We have found that the proximity of the disseminator is important, in large part because of the advantage of utilizing familiar and established channels of communication. Local opinion leader programs, with assistance from the regional dissemination officer could be potent forces for change by trying out promising innovations and agreeing to help disseminate them to other local programs through site visits, workshops, state professional association meetings, and other means.

- The national dissemination system should be adequately funded. The cost would not be insignificant, but it should be weighed against the benefits of sharply increased utilization of 309(b) project results and other tangible benefits to the field. Utilization is the name of the game. There is no satisfactory alternative to some form of national dissemination system.

(7) THE DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION AND STATE ABE AGENCIES SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE CONSOLIDATION OF SMALL, MARGINAL ABE PROGRAMS

Our findings indicate clearly that small, marginal programs are very unlikely to be innovative. This situation exists in part because such programs do not have directors who are professional adult educators and who are able to devote adequate time to ABE. Another contributing factor is that small programs are usually not part of the professional communications network that is a major source of information about innovative program practices. Finally, small, marginal programs generally lack the financial resources, security, and stability that, according to our data, are important organizational conditions favoring innovativeness.

(8) THE DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION AND STATE ABE AGENCIES SHOULD ENCOURAGE AND PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR FULL TIME LOCAL ADULT EDUCATION DIRECTORS

This recommendation follows from the preceding one. The most important factor in program innovativeness was found to be the director's professionalism, and a major component of professionalism was the amount of time devoted to ABE and other adult education responsibilities. It is hardly astounding that programs which employ directors who work ten hours per week and have no training or career interest in adult education are seldom innovative. The place to begin, if adult education programs are to be rapidly upgraded, is with the director.

(9) *THE DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION AND STATE ABE AGENCIES SHOULD PLACE HIGH PRIORITY ON THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ADULT EDUCATION DIRECTOR*

There is no point in consolidating marginal programs and employing full-time directors unless these individuals are prepared for their jobs. An essential component of professional competence is training. In-service education opportunities should be developed and supported, but particular emphasis must be given to graduate level training if professionalism is to be taken seriously. There is an urgent need for a fellowship program to enable ABE directors, and other full-time professional staff as well, to complete graduate degrees in the professional field of adult education.

EPILOGUE

FIRST STEPS TOWARD A NATIONAL DISSEMINATION SYSTEM

USOE's funding of this study constituted a significant initial effort to come to grips with the complex problem of dissemination of 309(b) results to local adult education programs. In fiscal year 1973, the Division of Adult Education followed-up on its earlier investment by awarding a new grant to the Center for Adult Education to enable us to put into practice the insights gained through research. In September, 1973 Project IDEA (Innovation Dissemination for the Education of Adults) was launched to demonstrate and evaluate selected elements of a national dissemination network similar to that outlined in the sixth recommendation above. At the time of this writing, Project IDEA is exactly halfway through its 18 month funding period and therefore little evaluative data are as yet available. The description which follows is limited to an overview of Project

goals and operations and to impressionistic judgments concerning our experience to date.

Overview of Project IDEA

IDEA does not constitute a full-fledged national dissemination system such as that described under the sixth recommendation in this report. It does, however, incorporate key elements of such a system in an inter-regional experiment involving New York, New Jersey, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska. Nation-wide project activities are limited to dissemination of a few selected innovations and a publications program featuring IDEA Review, a quarterly newsletter describing innovative program practices in adult education; IDEA reports, detailed analyses of particular innovations written in the format of a replication manual; and IDEA Bulletins, brochures which describe selected innovations available nationally through Project headquarters in New York.

The principal purpose of Project IDEA is to demonstrate an inter-regional collaborative dissemination system that is effective in securing actual utilization of improved practices and products by local adult education programs. A critical assumption of the project is that effective dissemination requires intensive, face-to-face interaction between trained change agents and practicing educators who can benefit from adoption of improved program practices. A further assumption is that effective dissemination requires that the change agent work with and through existing systems of communication and influence, including state education departments, regional and local professional assqciations, regional staff development units, and informal networks of professional/social interaction. These assumptions are not new; they have been put into practice for decades by the

Cooperative Extension Service through its network of county agents in such fields as home economics and agriculture. In many important respects, Project IDEA is an adaptation of the time-tested Cooperative Extension model of planned change.

The organization of Project IDEA is simple. A full-time program innovation agent is assigned to each USOE region (Region 2, New York, New Jersey; and Region 7, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska). He receives back-up support from a small headquarters staff in New York City. While the job of the innovation agent is not at all simple, many of his functions can be understood in the context of a four-phase process model. In the first phase, the innovation agent visits local adult education programs to (a) determine what their specific program needs are; (b) to identify any organizational or situational characteristics which might facilitate or impede the utilization of certain new practices; and (c) to note any locally produced innovations worthy of dissemination to other programs. Phase II is an adaptation-development phase. Innovations which meet local needs are adapted to meet local circumstances and promising locally produced innovations are field tested, evaluated and packaged. During Phase III actual dissemination is conducted--dissemination aimed at securing utilization of the innovations rather than merely publicizing them. For each innovation, a dissemination strategy is selected that reflects the nature of the product and the organizational characteristics of the users. Quite often, technical assistance is rendered to aid the user in implementation. During Phase IV, the results of dissemination are evaluated according to the number of adoptions secured and other pertinent data. The evaluation results are used as feedback in the continuing refinement of the system.

As noted previously, the other key element in the IDEA system is the small headquarter staff located at the Center for Adult Education, Columbia University. In addition to operating a varied publications program, the headquarters staff assists the regional innovation agents through (1) identifying, and maintaining a data bank on, relevant innovations; (2) conducting searches for information on innovations of special interest, utilizing existing data banks and information systems; (3) helping in adaptive development of promising innovations that need field testing, "polishing," or packaging; (4) conducting systematic evaluations of innovations prior to intensive dissemination to assure quality and relevance and to protect local "consumers."

At mid-point in its operations, Project IDEA seems to be quite successful; certainly we have learned a great deal. One important lesson learned is that innovations do not grow on trees, ready to be plucked and consumed like ripe fruit. On the contrary, promising innovations need to be sought out and most require considerable adaptive development before they can actually be disseminated for local use. A second thing we have learned (it was no surprise) is that the program innovation agent needs several months just to get the "lay of the land." It is vitally important that he spend most of his time in the field (particularly at first) visiting local programs and state and regional staff, attending meetings and conferences, and doing whatever else necessary to assess local needs and problems and to gain the trust and support of practitioners and decision-makers at both the local and state levels.

The intent of Project IDEA is not primarily to provide direct service to the field, but rather to demonstrate and evaluate a model for dissemination that could subsequently be replicated or adapted for wider use on a continuing

basis. Consequently, as the Project evolves we are continuously assessing and documenting what experience has taught us. Toward the end of the project period, we will undertake a series of field studies and surveys to evaluate the extent of our success in securing adoption of innovations by local ABE programs in the two demonstration regions.

The outcome of Project IDEA, whether judged successful or not, promises to have significant implications for future efforts by USOE and the states to develop an effective national system for innovation dissemination and utilization. Educational R&D in general, and the 309(b) adult education special projects program in particular, serve no useful purpose unless their outcomes are utilized. The cost of effective dissemination/utilization systems will not be insignificant, but the price of the present non-system is widely recognized as intolerably high.